



SUN PRAIRIE POLICE DEPARTMENT

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

A-08

Citizen Observer Program

Administrative

POLICY NUMBER: A-08		DATE: April 16, 2012
SUBJECT: Citizen Observer Program		APPROVED BY: Sgt. Jason Lefeber
AUTHOR/ORIGINATOR: Jason Lefeber	SECTION MONITOR:	
RECORDS MANAGEMENT STATEMENT: Replaces 9005.00 (04-18-08)		

[POLICY](#) | [OBJECTIVE](#) | [DEFINITION](#) | [PROCEDURE](#) | [ATTACHMENTS](#) | [HISTORY](#)

Policy

[BACK TO TOP](#)

The Sun Prairie Police Department recognizes the importance of having a positive and participative public relations program. As part of this program, the Department permits interested individuals the opportunity to observe police department functions and operations.

Objective

[BACK TO TOP](#)

To provide department members guidelines for their involvement in the Observer Program as well as guidelines for citizen observers who participate in the program.

Definitions

[BACK TO TOP](#)

Citizen Observer Application:

A form completed by individuals who are interested in observing a Department employee during their daily course of work.

Observer:

An individual who, with permission, observes the work activities of a department member for some or all of the department members work day.

Procedure

[BACK TO TOP](#)

A. OBSERVER REQUISITES

1. As part of the Department's public relations program, interested individuals may be permitted to observe uniformed officers during the officer's normal tour of duty. Individuals also may observe the Records Bureau, Dispatch Center, or Municipal Court.
2. Generally, permission to be an observer may be given to adult students who are actively pursuing a police related course of study, school approved interns, an employee's spouse, local elected officials, and members of the Police and Fire Commission. Other interested civilians may request and may receive permission from the Chief of Police or their designee to be a citizen observer. For interested civilians and adult students this is accomplished by completing the citizen observer application.

3. Department members may make a request to have someone they know be an observer with them. Requests made by department members shall be submitted in writing (e.g. an email) to the appropriate shift supervisor for review. Generally, requests should be made at least several days prior to the date of the participation. Under unusual circumstances, a shift supervisor may grant permission on short notice for employees to have an immediate family member as an observer.
4. Off-duty Department members may, with the proper prior approval, participate in the observer program as an observer. However, they will be held to the same standards of conduct and appearance as if they were on-duty. Off-duty officers are not required to be in a uniform; however, they shall have proper identification and their authorized weapon with them while they are an observer. Their participation as an observer shall be documented in the supervisory planning file.
5. Generally, investigative personnel will not participate in the observer program (i.e. having an individual be an observer with them). However, the Support Services Lieutenant or Detective Sergeant may grant permission for investigative personnel to participate in the observer program in a manner consistent with other provisions of this policy.
6. The Department has a justified interest in knowing who is requesting to be an observer and the reason for their request. Except for the Chief of Police and supervisors, no one (including off-duty personnel), has a right to be an observer at a time of their choosing or without proper prior approval. Off-duty personnel receiving a ride to or from their normal tour of duty are not considered to be an observer providing this conveyance is direct and restricted to that travel time necessary to make the conveyance.
7. Local elected officials, Police and Fire Commission members and Police Department employees, are permitted to request to be an observer on short notice. They are permitted to contact a shift supervisor or Officer-In-Charge directly to obtain verbal permission.

B. OBSERVER GUIDELINES

1. The full name of all observers shall be entered into one of the observer log books. These books are kept at each building for this purpose (dispatch and code 3 roll call room).
 - It is the responsibility of the officer who is involved in the observer program to make certain this is completed.
 - The officer shall advise civilian observers they must read the list of conduct limitations located in this Policy and Procedure.
2. **All observers** shall sign the attached "Indemnification Agreement" and "Waiver of Liability" forms in the presence of and witnessed by the officer/employee involved in the observer program. In the case of a juvenile, the child's parent will also sign the agreement in the presence of the witness. (This also applies to observing in other approved areas of the Department.)
3. Observers will not be allowed to participate in the program while possessing a firearm (concealed or open carry), even if they have a permit. As noted in Section IV.A.4 of this policy, Sun Prairie Officers who are participating in the observer program shall have proper identification and their authorized weapon with them while they are an observer. However, officers from a different agency who are observers are not allowed to possess a firearm while an observer.
4. The following limitations and restrictions on the observer program shall be followed by all department personnel:
 - Probationary officers are **excluded** from the observer program and **will not** take someone who falls under the guidelines of this program with them on their tour-of-duty.
 - With special permission from the Chief of Police or his designee, persons between six (6) and thirteen (13) years old may only ride with an officer during parades. They are not permitted at any other time.
 - Individuals between fourteen (14) and seventeen (17) years of age may be permitted to ride with an officer between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.
 - Officers shall not engage in any high-speed pursuit with a civilian observer as a passenger. If the officer is required to

assist in a pursuit, the civilian observer shall exit the vehicle in a safe location before the officer can engage in the pursuit. The officer shall promptly provide the dispatcher with the location of the observer. The dispatcher shall attempt to have the observer picked up as soon as possible.

5. Observers...

◦ **May:**

- **Accompany an officer into a residence or business place while the officer is conducting official business, if the officer deems it appropriate and safe for the observer to do so.** Sworn Police Department employees who are observers are not restricted in this manner, but should always use good judgment with regard to their actions.

◦ **Shall Not:**

- Identify themselves as a member of the Police Department (Does not apply to sworn Sun Prairie Officers).
- **Leave any police vehicle at a traffic stop or accident scene (except for safety reasons).** Duty officers may request assistance from properly trained and equipped interns, off-duty officers, Fire Dept. personnel and EMS personnel.
- Use any department equipment, including the police radio, unless directed to do so by an officer.
- Use any information obtained while observing which would embarrass any other individual.
- Participate in the observer program unless their manner of dress and personal conduct is such that members of the Department and the community are not offended.
- Smoke in any police vehicle.

C. ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES

1. There may be times when an observer must be assigned and officers do not have discretion in those situations.
2. Shift Supervisors and Commanding Officers have the authority to limit the number of times any person participates in the observer program, when in their opinion, no useful purpose is served.

Attachments

[BACK TO TOP](#)

Posted	Title	Type
12/9/2011	Waiver of Liability - Citizen Observer	Form (PDF)
3/29/2012	Indemnification Agreement - Citizen Observer	Form (PDF)
6/7/2012	Citizen Observer Application	Application (PDF)
3/29/2012	Citizen Observation Application Workflow (Officer)	Workflow (PDF)

VI. HISTORY:

[BACK TO TOP](#)

Date Published	Statement
April 16, 2012	Replaces 9005.00 (04-18-08)